

Exposer of CIA Praised It When He Resigned in 1968

3/8/77
By William Greider
Washington Post Staff Writer

Philip B. F. Agee, the former intelligence officer who has written and published a diary exposing Central Intelligence Agency clandestine activities, expressed a warm attitude toward the agency when he resigned from it.

"I will continue to hold in high regard the importance of the agency's activities in the interest of the security of the United States," Agee wrote in 1968 when he resigned after 12 years in the CIA. "I am hopeful that as my personal crisis subsides I can be of use to agency programs in years to come."

Since then, Agee has embraced a leftist viewpoint of American foreign policy and his recently published book, "Inside the Company: CIA Diary," exposes scores of names and operations in Latin America where he served in Ecuador, Uruguay and Mexico.

Copies of Agee's letter of resignation have been circulated by the CIA to members of oversight committees on Capitol Hill and a copy was read by CIA Director William E. Colby at a House hearing last Wednesday. Reached by telephone in Lisbon, Agee confirmed its authenticity, but said it did not express his true

feelings about the CIA at the time he resigned.

"I did say good things about the agency because my plan then was to stay in Mexico City in business," Agee said. "I did not want to give the agency any inclination to believe that I had resigned for any political reasons. Relations were so close then between the agency and the Mexican government they could have forced me out of the country."

Agee's book has been published in England and Canada, but his agent, Scott Meredith, is still negotiating for an American publisher. The CIA reportedly was forced to transfer many of its Western Hemisphere Division officers when it learned that their names would be exposed by Agee.

In his letter of resignation, Agee sounded as though he would honor the CIA's oath of secrecy, required of all employees, when he wrote: "Although personal circumstances incompatible at this time with the best interests of the agency have precipitated this resignation, I also wish to make clear that I understand security priorities."

Agee who now lives in England, said his personal problems included divorce and increasing distaste for the role

which the CIA played in Latin America, but his political viewpoint moved gradually toward socialism over a period of years after his resignation, as he recounts in his book. After several unsuccessful years in business, he moved to Paris to work on the book and visited Cuba several times for research on Latin American political unrest during the 1960s.

Colby told a House appropriations subcommittee last month that he is determined to try to prevent publication of Agee's book in the United States even though it is getting wide distribution in other countries. The CIA won an injunction against an earlier book published in the United States by another former CIA officer, deleting some material of "Intelligence," by Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks.

Colby said Agee's revelations have already caused harassment of CIA operatives and their families and "I do not think I can stand idly by" and allow Agee to "profit further if I can restrain him."

Agee said he hopes to return to the United States once the book is published here. The CIA director has said it is possible that the author could be prosecuted if his revelations of classified material were intended to harm the United States.